Gays may get job protection

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Democratic takeover gives bill better chance

By KYLE HENLEY
THE GAZETTE

DENVER • A shift in legislative power may give a bill protecting gay and lesbian employees from being fired for their sexual orientation a better chance of passage than in years past.

2005 General Assembly

Democrats took control of the Colorado House and Senate in November for the first time in 44 years. In previous years, Republicans had blocked bills extending more rights to the gay, lesbian and bisexual community.

Today, Senate Bill 28, which adds homosexuals to the list of protected classes under Colorado's employment laws, will be heard by the Senate Business Affairs and Labor Committee.

"I certainly hope I can get it out of committee this year, which has not been the case in years past," said Sen. Jen Veiga, D-Denver, sponsor of SB28.

Previous versions of the bill have been more sweeping in scope, barring landlords from refusing to rent to gay tenants.

Veiga said she kept her bill focused on employment to keep the debate on what she considers to be a basic civil right.

"Our existing laws say you can't fire somebody based on race or gender or religion, and we are just adding sexual orientation," she said.

Lawmakers who oppose the measure say it is more complicated than it sounds.

Often, it is impossible to tell the difference between gay or straight employees, said Sen. Andy McElhany, R-Colorado Springs. That's not a problem when it comes to other protected classes, such as race or gender.

"I have a problem creating a new protected class when businesses can't tell who members of the class are," McElhany said.

Gay rights groups hope that the increasingly high-profile image of gays and lesbians on television make the public more aware of gay issues.

"I think a lot of educational opportunities have happened in the last 12 months," said Ryan Acker, director of the Colorado Springs Gay and Lesbian Community Center. "There has been so much in the media and on television shows. We hope it will be a lot easier this year."

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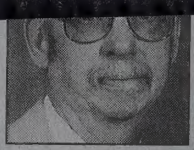

Delwin Wiese

on August 10, 1931 at West Point, Nebraska, a son of the late Nicholas and Leona Doescher Wiese.

Del was a retired glass glazier and carpenter, he had built his own homes with the help of friends and he had also done many other carpentry jobs for many other people. Del was a member of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Colorado Springs, he was a volunteer at the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo and had also worked as a shuttle bus driver at the Colorado Springs Airport.

He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Patricia Ann Tappert Wiese, they were married on April 18, 1954 at Norfolk, Nebraska; he is also survived by a son; Jeffrey Wiese and his life partner, Greg Gutierrez; a daughter, Kelli Frank both of LeAnna Kennedy of Crete, Nebraska. Del was also preceded in death by a son, Scott Michael Wiese and a sister, Arlene Ott.

Visitation will be from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 25, 2005 at Evergreen Funeral Home. Funeral service will be at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, January 26, 2005 at Holy Cross Lutheran Church 4125 Constitution Ave. Colorado Springs. Interment will follow at Evergreen Cemetery in Colorado Springs.

The family requests that memorial donations be made to the Pikes Peak Hospice Foundation 825 E. Pikes Peak Colorado Springs, CO in Del's memory.

Evergreen
FUNERAL HOME
1830 East Fountain Blvd.
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80910

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